

Mr. Speaker, nearly a decade later, the families of those victims who died in these bombings still have not been compensated. In contrast, after the catastrophic events of September 11, Congress acted relatively quickly to set up the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund, which paid out nearly \$6 billion to 2,880 families of those injured on that catastrophic day. We have shown compassion toward those affected by terrorism, and we have shown that we can act with purpose and haste. It is now time to finally act to compensate the families of those who died in East Africa.

In the case of the Kenya bombings, a 2001 bipartisan review panel found no negligence per se, but did find that there was an "institutional failure . . . to recognize threats posed by transnational terrorism and vehicle bombs worldwide." The intelligence community had been monitoring several Al Qaeda associates in Nairobi for 2 years. That information was not shared with the diplomats bidding on assignments in Nairobi. Prior to the attack, then-Ambassador Prudence Bushnell warned the State Department about the vulnerability of the embassy and requested more security. Instead of properly addressing Bushnell's concerns, State replied: "go back to Nairobi, don't send any more cables about this or we are going to place a statement in your personnel file."

After this cavalier treatment of embassy officials in Africa, many of the relatives of those killed were treated dismissively by the State Department upon returning to the United States. Instead of compassion they found bureaucracy, and instead of recompense they found only red tape. Now, 9 years later, those families are still awaiting sufficient compensation. While no amount of money can bring back loved ones or heal the wounds this act of terrorism caused, we must make an effort to ensure that the families receive some degree of comfort.

This legislation would amend the Foreign Service Act to provide a death benefit to all U.S. Government employees abroad in U.S. diplomatic facilities who are killed in an act of international terrorism. It would retroactively require the Secretary of State to compensate those killed since 1998, including the Nairobi families, at ten times the salary of the highest paid employee in the embassy.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation recognizes one of the most tragic and unfortunate incidents in the history of the Department of State. We have waited too long to bring recognition and compensation to the families of those who perished in these tragic bombings. I am pleased to have worked with these brave families to bring this legislation, with a full compensation package, before the Committee today.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support this legislation, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2828, as amended.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

□ 1245

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Natural Resources:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 2, 2007.

HON. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI: This letter serves as my intent to resign from the House Natural Resources Committee, effective today. I appreciated the opportunity to serve on this important committee and its jurisdictional prerogatives that affect the resources on Federal lands across our nation.

Sincerely,

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Agriculture:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, October 2, 2007.

HON. NANCY PELOSI,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER PELOSI: This letter serves as my intent to resign from the House Agriculture Committee, effective today. I appreciated the opportunity to serve on this important committee and its jurisdictional prerogatives that affect the farmers, ranchers, and consumers of our nation.

Sincerely,

KEVIN MCCARTHY,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

ETHIOPIA DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2007

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2003) to encourage and facilitate the consolidation of peace and security, respect for human rights, democracy, and economic freedom in Ethiopia, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 2003

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007".

SEC. 2. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States to—

- (1) support the advancement of human rights, democracy, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, peacekeeping capacity building, and economic development in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;
- (2) seek the unconditional release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia;
- (3) foster stability, democracy, and economic development in the region;
- (4) support humanitarian assistance efforts, especially in the Ogaden region;
- (5) collaborate with Ethiopia in the Global War on Terror; and
- (6) strengthen United States-Ethiopian relations based on the policy objectives specified in paragraphs (1) through (5).

SEC. 3. SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA.

The Secretary of State shall—

- (1) provide financial support to local and national human rights groups and other relevant civil society organizations to help strengthen human rights monitoring and regular reporting on human rights conditions in Ethiopia;
- (2) provide legal support, as needed, for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia and assist local, national, and international groups that are active in monitoring the status of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia;
- (3) seek to promote and bolster the independence of the Ethiopian judiciary through—
 - (A) facilitation of joint discussions between court personnel, officials from the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice, relevant members of the legislature, and civil society representatives on international human rights standards; and
 - (B) encouraging exchanges between Ethiopian and United States jurists, law schools, law professors, and law students, especially in legal fields such as constitutional law, role of the judiciary, due process, political and voting rights, criminal law and procedure, and discrimination;
- (4) establish a program, in consultation with Ethiopian civil society, to provide for a judicial monitoring process, consisting of indigenous organizations, international organizations, or both, to monitor judicial proceedings throughout Ethiopia, with special focus on unwarranted government intervention on matters that are strictly judicial in nature, and to report on actions needed to strengthen an independent judiciary;
- (5) establish a program, in consultation with Ethiopian civil society, and provide support to other programs, to strengthen independent media in Ethiopia, including training, and technical support;
- (6) expand the Voice of America's Ethiopia program;
- (7) support efforts of the international community to gain full and unfettered access to the Ogaden region for—
 - (A) humanitarian assistance organizations; and
 - (B) independent human rights experts; and
- (8) work with appropriate departments and agencies of the Government of the United States and appropriate officials of foreign governments—
 - (A) to identify members of the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime and officials of the current Government of Ethiopia who were engaged in gross human rights violations, including those individuals who may be residing in the United States; and

(B) to support and encourage the prosecution of individuals identified under subparagraph (A) in the United States or Ethiopia.

SEC. 4. SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIZATION IN ETHIOPIA.

(a) STRENGTHENING LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES.—The Secretary of State shall—

(1) provide assistance to strengthen local, regional, and national parliaments and governments in Ethiopia, as needed;

(2) establish a program focused on reconciliation efforts between the Government of Ethiopia and political parties, including in minority communities, in preparation for negotiation and for participation in the political process; and

(3) provide training for civil society groups in election monitoring in Ethiopia.

(b) DEMOCRACY ENHANCEMENT.—

(1) ASSISTANCE.—United States technical assistance for democracy promotion in Ethiopia should be made available to all political parties and civil society groups in Ethiopia.

(2) RESTRICTION.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Nonessential United States assistance shall not be made available to the Government of Ethiopia if the Government of Ethiopia acts to obstruct United States technical assistance to advance human rights, democracy, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, economic development, and economic freedom in Ethiopia.

(B) DEFINITION.—In this paragraph, the term “nonessential United States assistance” means assistance authorized under any provision of law, other than humanitarian assistance, food aid programs, assistance to combat HIV/AIDS and other health care assistance, peacekeeping assistance, and counter-terrorism assistance.

SEC. 5. ENSURING GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, DEMOCRACY, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA.

(a) LIMITATION ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE; TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS.—

(1) LIMITATION ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in subparagraph (B), security assistance shall not be provided to Ethiopia until such time as the certification described in paragraph (3) is made in accordance with such paragraph.

(B) EXCEPTION.—Subparagraph (A) shall not apply with respect to peacekeeping assistance, counter-terrorism assistance, or international military education and training for civilian personnel under section 541 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (commonly referred to as “Expanded IMET”). Peacekeeping or counter-terrorism assistance provided to Ethiopia shall not be used for any other security-related purpose or to provide training to security personnel or units against whom there is credible evidence of gross human rights abuses or violations.

(2) TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS.—Beginning on the date that is 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act and until such time as the certification described in paragraph (3) is made in accordance with such paragraph, the President shall deny a visa and entry into the United States to—

(A) any official of the Government of Ethiopia—

(i) who has been involved in giving orders to use lethal force against peaceful demonstrators or police officers in Ethiopia; or

(ii) against whom there is credible evidence of gross human rights abuses or violations;

(B) security personnel of the Government of Ethiopia who were involved in the June or November 2005 shootings of demonstrators;

(C) security personnel responsible for murdering Etenesh Yemam; and

(D) security personnel responsible for murdering prisoners at Kaliti prison in the aftermath of the election violence in 2005.

(3) CERTIFICATION.—The certification described in this paragraph is a certification by the President to Congress that the Government of Ethiopia is making credible, quantifiable efforts to ensure that—

(A) all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia have been released, their civil and political rights restored, and their property returned;

(B) prisoners held without charge or kept in detention without fair trial in violation of the Constitution of Ethiopia are released or receive a fair and speedy trial, and prisoners whose charges have been dismissed or acquitted and are still being held are released without delay;

(C) the Ethiopian judiciary is able to function independently and allowed to uphold the Ethiopian Constitution and international human rights standards;

(D) security personnel involved in the unlawful killings of demonstrators and others, including Etenesh Yemam, and Kaliti prisoners are held accountable;

(E) family members, friends, legal counsel, medical personnel, human rights advocates, and others have access, consistent with international law, to visit detainees in Ethiopian prisons;

(F) print and broadcast media in Ethiopia are able to operate free from undue interference and laws restricting media freedom, including sections of the Ethiopian Federal Criminal Code, are revised;

(G) licensing of independent radio and television in Ethiopia is open and transparent;

(H) Internet access is not restricted by the government and the ability of citizens to freely send and receive electronic mail and otherwise obtain information is guaranteed;

(I) the National Election Board (NEB) includes representatives of political parties with seats in the Ethiopian Parliament and the NEB functions independently in its decision-making;

(J) representatives of international human rights organizations engaged in human rights monitoring work, humanitarian aid work, or investigations into human rights abuses in Ethiopia are admitted to Ethiopia and allowed to undertake their work in all regions of the country without undue restriction; and

(K) Ethiopian human rights organizations are able to operate in an environment free of harassment, intimidation, and persecution.

(4) WAIVER.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—The President may waive the application of paragraph (1) or (2) on a case-by-case basis if the President determines that such a waiver is in the national security interests of the United States.

(B) NOTIFICATION.—Prior to granting a waiver under the authority of subparagraph (A), the President shall transmit to Congress a notification that includes the reasons for the waiver.

(b) TREATMENT OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The President, the Secretary of State, and other relevant officials of the Government of the United States shall call upon the Government of Ethiopia to immediately—

(A) release any and all remaining political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, especially prisoners held without charge; and

(B) allow full and unfettered access to the Ogaden region by humanitarian aid organizations and international human rights investigators.

(2) TORTURE VICTIM RELIEF.—While it is the responsibility of the Government of Ethiopia

to compensate the victims of unlawful imprisonment and torture and their families for their suffering and losses, the President shall provide assistance for the rehabilitation of victims of torture in Ethiopia at centers established for such purposes pursuant to section 130 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2152).

(c) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of Congress that the Government of the United States should—

(1) encourage the Government of Ethiopia to enter into discussions with opposition political groups interested in reconciliation in order to bring such groups into full participation in the political and economic affairs of Ethiopia, including their legalization as political parties, and provide such assistance as is warranted and necessary to help achieve the goal described in this paragraph; and

(2) provide assistance to promote the privatization of government owned or controlled industries and properties in Ethiopia.

SEC. 6. SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ETHIOPIA.

(a) RESOURCE POLICY ASSISTANCE.—The President, acting through the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development and in cooperation with the World Bank and other donors, shall provide assistance, as needed, for sustainable development of Ethiopia's Nile and Awash River resources, including assistance to help Ethiopia with the technology necessary for the construction of irrigation systems and hydroelectric power that might prevent future famine.

(b) HEALTH CARE ASSISTANCE.—The President, acting through the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, shall provide material support to hospitals, clinics, and health care centers in Ethiopia, especially hospitals, clinics, and health care centers in rural areas.

SEC. 7. REPORT.

Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the President shall transmit to Congress a report on the implementation of this Act, including a description of a comprehensive plan to address issues of security, human rights, including in the Ogaden region, democratization, and economic freedom that potentially threaten the stability of Ethiopia.

SEC. 8. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act \$20,000,000 for each of the fiscal years 2008 and 2009.

(b) AVAILABILITY.—Amounts appropriated pursuant to the authorization of appropriations under subsection (a) are authorized to remain available until expended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) and the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this bill and yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, first let me thank Chairman LANTOS for his leadership in bringing this bill up and the ranking member, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, and the ranking member of the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee, Mr. SMITH, for H.R. 2003, the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007.

Ethiopia is one of our most reliable allies as one of Africa's most capable peacekeeping forces and is making positive steps towards a prosperous economy and functioning democracy. However, Ethiopia continues to be a country riven with conflict that threatens to tear the country apart. Ethiopia took a major step backwards in the immediate aftermath of the 2005 general elections when the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency, outlawed any public gatherings, and placed all security forces under his direct command. While the government performed commendably in negotiations with opposition parties before the election, the response after the election set off a violent confrontation between the opposition and the government. The opposition accused the government of vote rigging and fraud and called for a public demonstration and civil disorder.

The government responded by ordering the security forces to fire live ammunition at demonstrators, killing some and detaining opposition leaders and their followers. In spite of continued negotiations between the government and the opposition, the political environment continued to deteriorate, resulting in regrettable death of civilians and police.

An estimated 112 political leaders, human rights activists, community leaders and journalists, including the founder of the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, were imprisoned and charged with treason and genocide. In spite of international pleas for more measured responses by the government towards its civilians, the Government of Ethiopia has continued to stifle and criminalize opposition activities and to intimidate and silence civil society and independent journalists.

The legislation before the House will withhold nonhumanitarian funds from the Ethiopian Government until democracy and respect for human rights are fully restored. It will send a strong signal of dissatisfaction toward the Ethiopian Government and increase pressure on the Ethiopian leaders to change. As I indicated, in leading up to the election, the government made debates available, opened up journalism and had the opposition candidates on equal footing. However, after the results, 193 people were killed, shot and murdered by sharpshooters.

So we are very disturbed. We urge our colleagues to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, I rise in very, very strong

support of the Ethiopian Democracy and Accountability Act. I am very happy that it has finally been brought to the floor. It is legislation that will limit and condition U.S. Government assistance on the Ethiopian Government provided that the government meets a very modest list of human rights benchmarks and provides financial support to human rights promoters in Ethiopia.

Mr. Speaker, the Ethiopian Democracy and Accountability Act is as timely now as it was last year, maybe even more so after the failure of so many attempts to promote human rights reform through dialogue and persuasion. It is clear that stronger measures are necessary, and they must come now. Human rights abuses have to be penalized.

Recently, Human Rights Watch reported that the Ethiopian Government, fighting an insurgency in Ogaden region, had forcibly displaced thousands of civilians in that region, burned villages and food stocks and imposed a trade blockade on the region. Just a few minutes ago in the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, we heard from a number of witnesses who told us very chilling tales. People who were there on the ground, human rights reporters on the ground were documenting the abuse that is being committed against people: rape, and a whole host of other gross indignities being committed, crimes against humanity by government forces.

Mr. Speaker, even the U.S. Department of State in its "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006" points out that there were numerous credible reports that security officials often beat or mistreated detainees. Massive arrests and detentions are common, the reports went on to say. Although the Ethiopian Constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, the government frequently did not observe these provisions in practice. Authorities regularly detained persons without warrants and denied access to counsel and family members, particularly in the outlying regions. The Independent Commission of Inquiry found that security officials held over 30,000 civilians incommunicado for up to 3 months in detention centers located in remote areas. Other estimates place the number of such detainees as high as 50,000.

This is only part of a long series of human rights outrages, Mr. Speaker, committed by Prime Minister Meles. On June 20, 2005, after an election that displeased the Prime Minister, almost 200 pro-democracy demonstrators in Addis were slaughtered when they demanded that there be a true accurate accounting of how people voted. It was a magnificent outpouring of Ethiopians. They voted. Eighty-five percent of the eligible voters poured out to vote despite much intimidation and despite the fact that many of the election observers all of a sudden were thrown out of the country by the Meles gov-

ernment, including NDI and the International Republican Institute. So they weren't there.

But despite all that, people voted, only to have, in many cases, their votes discounted by the government. Then, as people took to the streets to protest, like I said, almost 200 pro-democracy demonstrators were gunned down.

When I visited Ethiopia in August of that year and met with Prime Minister Meles, I urged him to investigate that atrocity, to punish those who were responsible and to release the political prisoners. Meles told me, I have a file on all of them, that is to say, all of the opposition leaders. He said, They are all guilty of treason. It is hard to put faith in the reformist intentions of a government official who says those kind of things.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that neither we nor the international community has pushed Meles hard enough on human rights and democracy issues because we have been satisfied perhaps that they cooperate with us to some extent in the war on terror. I would point out to my colleagues that the war on terror is very important, but no regime that terrorizes its own citizens can be a reliable ally in the war on terror. Terrorism isn't just a military issue. It is also a human rights issue. Terrorists come from countries where their governments fail to respect their human rights. In promoting human rights in Ethiopia, we are attacking terrorism at its root.

Mr. Speaker, I have come to know and admire many people from Ethiopia's great and ancient civilization. I ensure my colleagues that democracy, human rights, and rule of law are things that they desperately want for their country. It should be our country's policy to promote these important things which correspond with our own long-term interests.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill; and, again, I congratulate my good friend and colleague from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) for his leadership on this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, let me once again thank the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) who has worked so hard on this issue of Ethiopia. We are very pleased that today the proof it is coming to fruition is the fact that this bill is here on the floor. I, too, met with Prime Minister Meles in the summer of 2006 and asked if he would consider releasing the prisoners. He once again said that it is up to the judiciary. It is not in his hands. I then went to the Kaliti prison and met with two of the witnesses who just testified this morning Dr. Nega and Ms. Mideska, who appreciated the pressure and the insistence that we had through the years and because perhaps they would still be in prison. But they are here as free citizens testifying before

the Africa and Global Health Subcommittee this morning.

So, once again, we have also in this bill made provisions to assist the Government of Ethiopia. We are saying that you need help in your judicial system, and there are funds in it for that, that we hope to get appropriated. We say the health system is in disrepair, and there are funds in it to help the health system. We say that there is a need for water projects, and in this bill there is financial assistance to help in the economic development.

So this is a bill that we are saying that Ethiopia is an ally of the United States. We need a strong Ethiopia. But we need a democratic Ethiopia, not an Ethiopia that is run by a dictatorial regime. So we are hoping that this bill will move forward and effect change in that great country with such a long and rich history.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007. As an original cosponsor of this legislation, I commend the majority and minority managers and urge strong support for this measure to support human rights, democracy, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, peacekeeping capacity building, and economic development in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; to collaborate with Ethiopia in the Global War on Terror; to seek the release of all political prisoners and prisoners of conscience in Ethiopia; to foster stability, democracy, and economic development in the region; and, finally, to strengthen U.S.-Ethiopian relations. This is a message not just to the leadership in Ethiopia, but also to the Secretary of State to take specified actions to support human rights and democratization in Ethiopia.

This important legislation expresses the sense of Congress that we should encourage the government of Ethiopia to enter into discussions with peaceful political groups to bring them into full participation in Ethiopia's political and economic affairs. We need to provide the necessary assistance to help achieve such a goal, so this legislation directs the President to provide Ethiopia with resource policy assistance and health care assistance. This legislation is crafted to seek a balance and return democracy to one of the African continent's oldest democracies.

Northern Virginia is home to one of the largest African immigrant populations in America, with significant numbers of Nigerians, Ethiopians, Eritreans, Somalians, and Ghanaians. They both enrich our culture, and enrich our appreciation of what a return to democracy in Ethiopia could mean. Ethiopia's peoples—in my District, in our country, and in Africa are the proud representatives of a great and ancient civilization. I believe we have an opportunity and responsibility to them to help restore democracy, human rights, and the rule of law—goals they want desperately for their own country. It should be our country's policy as well to promote these objectives which correspond to our long-term interests.

What it ought not to mean was last summer's sentencing of 35 opposition politicians and activists to life in prison—in a case where the prosecution had asked for the death penalty against the defendants, who included Ethiopia's top opposition leaders. Those sen-

tenced to life imprisonment include the leader of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy, Hailu Shawel; Berhanu Nega, who was elected mayor of Addis Ababa; former Harvard scholar Mesfin Woldemariam; and former U.N. special envoy and former Norfolk State University professor, Yacob Hailemariam.

Thus, this is an important step for the Congress to take to foster accountability for the actions the Ethiopian government has taken that undermine the rule of law and fundamental political freedoms. It is an important act to restrict security assistance for Ethiopia until such time as the President certifies that, among other things, the government of Ethiopia has taken steps to release political prisoners, hold security forces accountable for human rights abuses related to the demonstrations of 2005, and the Meles regime is respecting freedom of speech and information and allowing human rights groups to operate without being harassed.

For, as our colleague CHRIS SMITH said, "Terrorism is not just a military issue; it is also a human rights issue. Terrorists come from countries whose governments failed to respect their human rights. In promoting human rights in Ethiopia, we are attacking terrorism at its roots." It is for this reason that the bill also contains provisions for economic assistance and health care assistance for victims of torture, and it authorizes \$20 million in 2008 and \$20 million in 2009 to carry out these provisions.

Equally important, this legislation is intended to promote accountability for the killing of innocent civilians by government security forces, to build the institutions of democracy, and to provide meaningful support for human rights and those who defend them in Ethiopia. It requires our Secretary of State to support human rights by establishing a mechanism to provide funds to local human rights organizations and victims' support networks to provide legal support for political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. In this legislation, we require the Secretary of State to put in place a means to identify and extradite members of the Mengistu regime currently residing in the United States. We are trying, through this effort today, to balance this demand for accountability by supporting democratization through directing the State Department to provide assistance to strengthen local, regional, and national democratic processes through training authorities, political parties, and civil society groups in negotiation skills, campaign management, and election monitoring. The legislation bars non-humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia if the ruling party obstructs U.S. efforts to provide human rights and democracy assistance and training within Ethiopia. It makes it illegal for members of the security forces who have committed human rights violations against civilians to receive U.S. security assistance training.

This bill does provide flexibility for the administration by providing a waiver the President can exercise to continue security assistance to programs with Ethiopia that support U.S. efforts on the Global War on Terror and the Ethiopians' efforts in United Nations peacekeeping and whatever is deemed necessary for the U.S. national interests.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot and must not remain silent, but rather we have an obligation to do much more in order to promote the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms

in Ethiopia—a very proud country with a tremendous heritage and history. We want to see Ethiopia move back, as it has in the past, to being our good ally. We can no longer allow this situation to fester.

Mr. LAHOOD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 2003, the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007. This important legislation authorizes \$20 million for both FY 2008 and FY 2009 to provide economic support for Ethiopia, the oldest independent nation in Africa.

H.R. 2003 provides a framework for support programs designed to impact all aspects of Ethiopian society. The bill would provide financial support to human rights groups to continue their efforts in Ethiopia, as well as expand the Voice of America's Ethiopia program. The legislation would also provide economic development assistance, with a focus on meeting the healthcare needs of the Ethiopian people. The legislation also requires the President to submit a report to the Congress outlining a comprehensive plan to address Ethiopia's many economic, security, and human rights issues.

Perhaps most importantly, H.R. 2003 places a number of limitations on our country's dealings with the Ethiopian government, requiring that a number of benchmarks be met before the full support of the United States is realized. The Ethiopian Government must allow the media to operate freely; the judiciary must operate independent of government influence; all political prisoners must be released; internet access cannot be restricted; and human rights and democratization groups must be allowed to operate free of government interference.

I believe our country can be a positive and powerful influence to the Ethiopians, and I am thankful that this Congress has turned its attention to a people that struggle to achieve the basic human freedoms that we enjoy. I urge adoption of the resolution.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H.R. 2003, the Ethiopia Democracy and Accountability Act of 2007, which I, together with over 80 of my colleagues, have co-sponsored. This important legislation reaffirms the United States commitment to supporting human rights, democracy, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, and economic development in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

I would like to thank Chairman PAYNE for introducing this important legislation, and Chairman LANTOS for his leadership on this important issue. I was pleased to work with both Chairmen within the Committee on Foreign Affairs to incorporate important language into the bill at the committee markup. As amended, to reflect my language, I believe that this bill is an important and firm diplomatic step toward addressing our serious concerns with Ethiopia.

My language will work to bolster an independent judiciary in Ethiopia by encouraging exchanges between Ethiopian and United States jurists, law schools, law professors, and law students, especially in legal fields such as constitutional law, role of the judiciary, due process, habeas corpus, political and voting rights, criminal law and procedure, and discrimination. Mr. Speaker, Ethiopia's judicial system is making important strides forward, but it still requires our support and ongoing engagement. Such exchanges would be mutually beneficially to both American and Ethiopian legal students and professionals.

In addition, I am pleased to have successfully offered language that added exemptions for international military education and training for civilian personnel under section 541 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, commonly referred to as "Expanded IMET," from the restrictions on security assistance until the Government of Ethiopia can certify it has met certain standards of human rights, democracy, and economic development. While I certainly believe these standards are crucial goals, and that we should be using our aid programs as an incentive for the government to meet these objectives, I also strongly believe that we must continue to fund crucial programs. IMET ensures that the military and related civilian personnel receive a range of necessary training, in important areas including human rights and military justice. I do not believe these crucial programs should be suspended, pending certification. Making sure that the military receives proper training, including in international standards and norms, is a crucial component to helping Ethiopia meet human rights specifications.

Finally, I offered language to provide assistance to promote the privatization of government industries and property. As Ethiopia transitions from a socialist structure to an open market, I believe it is mutually beneficial for us to assist in this groundbreaking transformation. My language authorizes the President, acting through USAID, to provide assistance to promote the privatization of government owned or controlled industries and property in Ethiopia.

Mr. Speaker, though Ethiopia is currently on the road to democracy, I do not believe we should be treating the country with kid gloves. This is a path that should be paved with civil and political discourse, peaceful transitions of power, and respect for human rights. By necessity, the achievement of a modern democracy requires the implementation of electoral reforms, the separation of powers in the government, and the establishment of a truly independent judiciary. These are the founding principles of our American Republic, and I have seen firsthand the progress on the path to democracy Ethiopia has made since the brutal dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam was brought down in 1991. I strongly believe that the United States should do all it can to support this transition, including bolstering civil society and speaking out when fundamental human rights are violated.

Mr. Speaker, Ethiopia is a leader in its region, and in the African continent, and has the potential to be a great global leader. However, years of fighting and alleged abuses are standing in the way of Ethiopia's progress. We need a roadmap toward establishing peace, stability, protection of human rights, and democracy in Ethiopia, and in the entire Horn of Africa region. This will necessitate addressing the ongoing lawlessness in neighboring Somalia, which continues to destabilize and threaten the entire region.

Ethiopia has a long and proud history. It is the cradle of mankind, as illustrated by "Lucy," also known as Dinkinesh (Amharic for "you are wonderful"), which is the nearly complete hominid skeleton discovered by archaeologists in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia on November 30, 1974. Lucy is estimated to have lived 3.2 million years ago and has redefined science's understanding of human evolution. I was happy to work with Texas State Senator Rodney Ellis, Ethiopian Ambassador Samuel

Assefa, and the Houston Museum of Natural Science to bring Lucy to Houston, which is one of only 9 American cities and the only city in Texas to host the exhibit. The bones are currently on display in Houston, and will be until April 2008.

Ethiopia is also the oldest independent nation in Africa, has never been colonized, and is home to the African Union. Despite Ethiopia's rich history, however, this bill recognizes that recent decades have brought hardship and suffering to Ethiopia's people, through military conflict, natural disasters, and a military dictatorship.

For over a decade in the House of Representatives, and prior to that in the Houston city council, I have been an outspoken and unwavering advocate for the country of Ethiopia and its people, both in Ethiopia and in the diaspora. Following in the legendary footsteps of my predecessor, Mickey Leland, who died attempting to alleviate the starvation faced by Ethiopia's innocent populace, I have been a champion of increasing foreign aid to, political, economic, and social cooperation with, and improving human rights in Ethiopia.

While I continue to advocate close interaction and constructive dialogue with Ethiopia and its leaders, I believe the human rights situation there must be addressed. Of particular recent concern was the detention of elected parliamentarians, human rights advocates, and independent journalists and the harsh response to protesters after Ethiopia's recent unprecedented elections in 2005. In response to reports that thousands of prisoners languished in prisons throughout Ethiopia, I was proud to join a number of my colleagues in sending a letter to Secretary Rice, expressing our strong concern about the treatment of detainees.

In July, an Ethiopian court harshly sentenced 35 opposition leaders and activists to life in prison and denied them the right to vote or run for public office on charges of inciting violence. Although I was pleased to see the Court rebuff the prosecution's call for the death sentence against these defendants, I believe that the sentence of life imprisonment is still too severe a punishment.

However, I am heartened by the active role that elders such as Professor Ephraim Isaac played in the negotiations for these prisoners' release, and I was extremely pleased that these negotiations led to the release of these prisoners. Only through amnesty will the Ethiopian government and opposition leaders be able to secure a path to reconciliation rather than assuring a future of political divisiveness.

This legislation reaffirms the United States commitment to supporting Ethiopia as it builds the necessary institutions and civil society framework for a successful democracy. It contains a number of important provisions directing the Department of State to provide mechanisms for supporting and monitoring the promotion of human rights and democracy within Ethiopia.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we in Congress should focus on the pursuit of truth. It is extremely important that we seek truthful accounts of what is going on in Ethiopia, and in the entire Horn of Africa region, and that we use these reports to develop a roadmap that will guide Ethiopia along the path to democracy and greater guarantees for human rights. This roadmap must be characterized, above all, by firm diplomacy.

I would like to conclude by reiterating my firm belief in the extreme importance of supporting the strengthening of democracy and human rights in Ethiopia.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PAYNE) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2003, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1300

COMMISSION ON THE ABOLITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE ACT

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3432) to establish the 200th Anniversary Commemoration Commission of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3432

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Commission on the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade Act".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS AND PURPOSE.

(a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

(1) On March 2, 1807, President Thomas Jefferson signed into law a bill approved by the Congress "An Act to prohibit the importation of slaves into any port or place within the jurisdiction of the United States" (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "1808 Transatlantic Slave Trade Act") and made it unlawful "to import or bring into the United States or territories thereof from any foreign kingdom, place or country, any negro, mulatto, or person of colour, with intent to hold, sell, or dispose of such . . . as a slave, or to be held to service or labour".

(2) Article I, Section 9 of the United States Constitution clearly spelled out that the international slave trade could not be banned before 1808, and it is only on January 1, 1808, that the 1808 Transatlantic Slave Trade Act went into effect.

(3) An Act entitled "An Act to continue in force 'An act to protect the commerce of the United States, and punish the crime of piracy,' and also to make further provisions for punishing the crime of piracy", enacted May 15, 1820, made it unlawful for any citizen of the United States to engage "in the slave trade, or . . . , being of the crew or ship's company of any foreign ship . . . , seize any negro or mulatto . . . with the intent to make . . . a slave . . . or forcibly bring . . . on board any such ship . . .".

(4) The transatlantic slave trade entailed the kidnapping, purchase, and commercial export of Africans, mostly from West and Central Africa, to the European colonies and new nations in the Americas, including the United States, where they were enslaved in forced labor between the 15th and mid-19th centuries.